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Why Not Make Sauerkraut?

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Popular Recipes

Savory Sauerkraut

- 1 quart sauerkraut
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon celery or caraway seed

Heat the butter in a skillet until golden brown and add the kraut and seasoning. Mix well, using a fork to separate the kraut. Cover and cook for five minutes. Serve hot.

Sauerkraut and Carrot Salad

- 2 cups sauerkraut
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unbroken pecan halves
- 8 medium carrots
- 1 cup cream dressing
- Lettuce

After washing and scraping carrots, run them through the coarse knife of a food chopper. Combine with sauerkraut. Add cream dressing. Decorate with pecan halves.

Sauerkraut Meat Pie

- 1 quart sauerkraut
- 12 small pork sausages

Place $\frac{1}{2}$ can of kraut in bottom of baking dish, sprinkle with tablespoon flour, add remainder of kraut dusted with one tablespoon flour; on this, place 12 small sausages nicely ground. Add one cup hot water. Cover all with crust made of your favorite baking powder biscuit dough. Bake $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Serve with brown gravy made with sausage drippings.

Sauerkraut With Apple

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup margarine or butter
- 2 cups sauerkraut
- 3 apples, peeled, cored and quartered
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- 2 small potatoes, peeled and grated
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon caraway seeds

Melt fat, add the sauerkraut, apples, onions and water. Cook until tender (about five minutes). Add raw grated potatoes, salt, sugar, and caraway seeds. Cook five minutes longer.

Sauerkraut With Spareribs

Brown the pieces of spareribs, fresh or canned, on each side in a frying pan with pork fat. Season the meat with a little salt, pepper and poultry seasonings; place half of the kraut in a casserole, add the meat, then the balance of the kraut and boiling water to cover. Bake in a slow oven about two hours, closely covered, and serve with mashed potatoes. Frankfurters may be used instead of spareribs, if desired.

Sauerkraut Juice Cocktail

Season sauerkraut juice with lemon juice. Serve it chilled.

University of Arizona
College of Agriculture, Agricultural Extension Service

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Why Not Make Sauerkraut?

By
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Why not make sauerkraut? If you don't have a few extra heads of cabbage in the garden, buy some. Sauerkraut will help you add variety and zest to your family's meals at little expense. It is appetizing, has good mineral and vitamin values, and offers many possibilities for the table.

Sauerkraut of excellent quality may be made at home if you follow a few simple rules.

1. Have all equipment and utensils scalded before using.
2. Work quickly. Pack with salt immediately after shredding cabbage.
3. Pack cabbage closely, but do not bruise.
4. Use proper amount and kind of salt. Too little may cause spoilage; too much will make cabbage tough.
5. Keep an even temperature between 65° and 75° F, during fermentation for best results.

When to Make

To make really good kraut, cool weather is needed. The natural fermentation necessary to produce zippy kraut is best controlled at an even temperature of 65° to 70° F.

How Much to Make

Sauerkraut is made most successfully in fairly large quantities. Twenty-five to forty pounds of shredded cabbage can be handled conveniently in a five-gallon crock.

Kraut can be made in half-gallon, quart, or pint jars. Two pounds of shredded cabbage can be packed in a one-quart jar. Directions for this process are given on page 6. Sauerkraut made in this way, however, does not usually ferment well enough to give a good tart flavor.

Materials Needed

Crock

Kitchen Scales

Measuring cup

Tablespoon

Dinner plate slightly smaller than the inside diameter of the crock. This, when weighted, will hold the cut cabbage down and press the juice out gradually.

A 2-quart glass jar filled with water makes a good weight.

Two 1-yard pieces of cheesecloth to put over the top of the kraut.

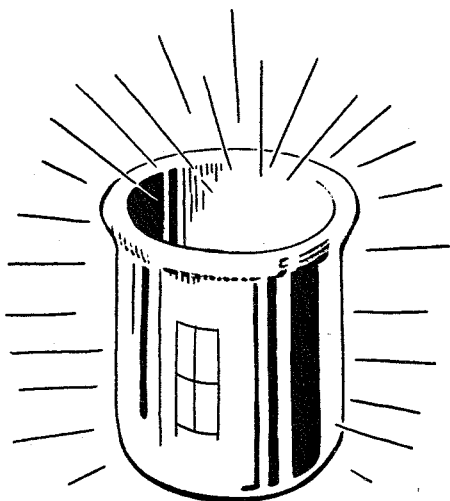
Kraut knife, kraut cutter, or large sharp knife with straight blade, and cutting board.

Dairy salt (Dairy salt is a pure salt. It does not contain iodine or other ingredients).

Commercially bottled vinegar. (5% acidity).

Be Painfully Clean

Cleanliness is important for success. Scrub the crock well with hot soapy water and then rinse with boiling water just before putting the cabbage into it.



The fruit plate, glass jar, and all other equipment should also be thoroughly washed and rinsed with boiling water.

The cheesecloth should be boiled before it is put over the kraut.

The table top, the cutting board, and your hands should be immaculate.

What It's All About

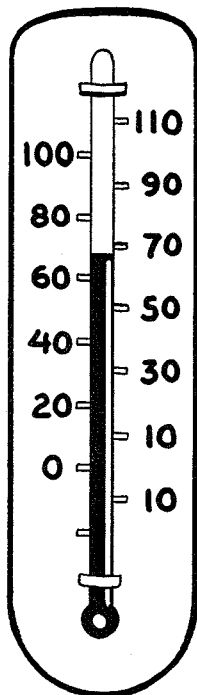
Lactic-acid-forming bacteria are responsible for the fermentation process which gives the kraut its flavor. These bacteria are on the cabbage leaves. They seem to be particularly plentiful on the outside leaves. That is why it is best to start with fresh, clean, top-quality cabbage. Then it will not be necessary to wash the heads or to trim off decayed or dirty leaves.

If the cabbage is cold, let it stand at room temperature overnight (from 65°-70° F.). Cabbage that has been at room temperature for several hours will be less brittle and not as apt to break in cutting.

Any addition of water to kraut dilutes the natural sugars of the cabbage and thus slows up fermentation.

To make sure of having enough lactic-acid-forming bacteria to make good kraut, it is sometimes a good idea to buy a small amount of good bulk kraut and use it as a "starter." The "starter" is scattered in with the freshly cut cabbage. Canned kraut cannot be used for this purpose.

Remember the bacteria grow best in the dark and at an even



temperature of between 65° and 70° F.

A small amount of vinegar added to the kraut helps prevent the growth of undesirable types of bacteria and yeasts and molds, though it does slow down the fermentation process.

If you don't know the characteristic smell and taste of good kraut, buy some fresh commercial kraut at a store which sells lots of it.

Here's How

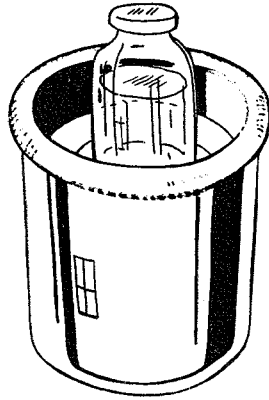
Wipe cabbages with a damp cloth. Cut in quarters and slice off half of each core section. Weigh out 5 pounds cabbage and 2 ounces salt (scant $\frac{1}{4}$ cup). Shred this cabbage directly into the freshly scalded crock. The cabbage should be shredded no thicker than the size of a dime. Sprinkle the salt over the cabbage, working the salt through with the hands until the juice starts.

Sprinkle in 2 teaspoons of vinegar and also a "starter" if you wish. Press down firmly to remove all air spaces. Be careful not to bruise the cabbage. For large amounts, a baseball bat or wooden tamper is easy to use. For small amounts use a milk bottle, wooden potato masher, or simply pack down with your fist.

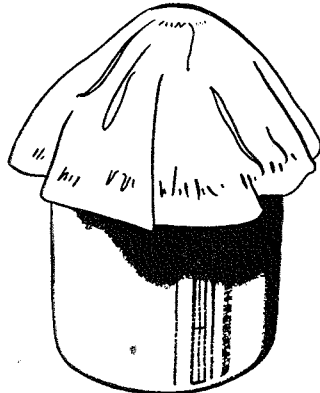
Then prepare another 5 pounds of cabbage and mix in the 2 ounces of salt. Sprinkle in the vinegar and starter and press down firmly. Continue adding similar layers until the desired amount in the container is reached. Leave at least 2 inches at the top of the container. When

all of the cabbage has been packed in, the juice should be running freely enough to cover the cabbage.

Boil a one-yard piece of cheesecloth for 15 minutes, wring out, and spread over the kraut. Cover with the clean, scalded dinner plate and put the water-filled scalded glass jar on top of the plate. The



weight of the jar should be just enough to bring the juice to the bottom of the plate but not over it. Water may be added to or taken from the jar that is being used as a weight so that it will be just right. Lay a clean cloth over the crock to keep out the dust and light.



Watching and Waiting

Watch the kraut every two or three days for mold or scum on the cheesecloth. If any appears, remove the cloth and replace with a freshly boiled one. Wash out and boil the old cloth for use next time. Any juice that bubbles over from the container should be discarded. Try to keep enough room at the top of the crock so that this will not happen.

It takes about 3 to 4 weeks to make good kraut at 65° F. A temperature of 75° to 85° F. will speed the process (8 to 12 days), but you will have more trouble with mold and scum. In some parts of Arizona, it might not be a bad idea to keep a dairy thermometer in the kraut. This would be the best way to check on the temperature.

Finis

When the bubbling stops, the kraut is finished. The perfectly cured product is a uniform light straw or golden color. It does not have any white parts. It is free from black and brown spots or reddish streaks. The kraut should be fairly firm in texture without being tough. It must never be mushy. The flavor of a properly fermented product is never bitter, sweet, or rancid.

You Can

If the sauerkraut is not to be used immediately, it should be canned. Heat the well-fermented kraut to simmering. Pack tightly into clean, hot jars, adding enough of the kraut

juice to cover the kraut and fill the jars to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the top. Do not use Mason jars with zinc caps. If there is not enough juice to fill the jars, add a hot mixture of one part of commercial vinegar to two parts of water. Adjust lids of jars according to the type used.

Process in a water bath which is simmering, about 185° F. Process pint jars for 10 minutes and quart jars for 15 minutes. Cool rapidly by plunging the filled hot jars into a large container of lukewarm water (120° F.) Place this container under a faucet and let cold water run continuously and slowly into the container until the product in the jar is cold. Cold flowing water must not strike the jars. Store all jars in a cool, dark place to retain the original fine quality of the kraut.

If tin cans are used, pack the kraut to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the top, making sure that the juice covers the kraut. Exhaust the cans for 8 minutes. Seal and process at simmering (185° F.) Process No. 2 cans for ten minutes and No. 3 cans for fifteen minutes. Cool rapidly by plunging into a large container of cold water.

Smaller Amounts

In making only a small quantity of sauerkraut, use sterilized quart glass-top jars. Pack the shredded cabbage closely into the jars, sprinkling salt over it as the jar is being filled. Use a wooden spoon for the packing. Use two level teaspoonfuls of salt to each quart of cabbage. Cover the packed cabbage with a pad of boiled cheesecloth and

insert two wooden strips endwise so that they catch under the neck of the jar and hold the cabbage under the brine. Place lid on jar loosely. Do not use metal lids or zinc caps.

Set jars in an enamel flat pan to catch the juice which may overflow. Try to keep at an even temperature between 65° F. to 70° F. If scum forms, remove the cheesecloth and replace with a freshly boiled one. If the brine level goes below the top of the packed material, add new 2½ percent brine (2 tablespoons salt to 1 quart water) promptly. Otherwise the exposed material may spoil.

When bubbles of gas no longer appear (one to two weeks depending on temperature) remove the cheesecloth and wooden strips. Add enough boiling brine to fill the jars to within ½ inch of the top. Press the kraut down firmly with a spoon to release any trapped gas bubbles. Wipe the tops of the jars dry and adjust lids according to the type of jars used. Be sure that the gas bubbles have stopped before you seal the jars or the jars may explode.

Process quart jars in a simmering water bath (185° F.) for twenty minutes. Cool jars rapidly by plunging the filled hot jars into a large container of lukewarm water (120° F.). Place this container under a faucet and let cold water run continuously and slowly into the container until the product in the jar is cold. Cold flowing water must not strike the jars.

If a cool, dark, and well-ventilated storage space is available and the kraut is held only a short time, processing is not imperative. Instead, the jars of kraut may be filled to overflowing with additional brine to exclude air, sealed and stored temporarily.

Why, Oh Why?



Pink kraut is caused by the growth of a pink yeast. It grows on or near the surface of kraut if the kraut is improperly packed or if the salt content is above normal or is unevenly distributed. If your kraut shows a pinkish color, throw the whole batch away. Before starting over again, be sure to scald all equipment.

White scum on kraut is a yeast growth and is controlled by having the proper covering and weight so that as little kraut or kraut juice as possible is exposed to the air.

Soft kraut is due to too low a salt content, too high a temperature, air spaces from poor packing, or to poor cleaning of the kraut container.

Slimy kraut is due to too much growth of certain types of bacteria. This growth may be caused by a high temperature or a low salt content.

Rotted kraut can only be found where there is a large supply of air as on or near the surface of kraut containers. It can be controlled by proper covering during curing.

Dark colors in kraut may be caused by uncleanness, failure to properly trim and clean the cabbage, uneven salting, a high curing temperature, or by excessive contact with air.

Off flavors are usually due to the mixing in of the spoiled parts of the kraut with the good.

Sauer Lettuce

Although not as familiar a food as sauerkraut, sauer lettuce is a very satisfactory product. Sauer lettuce has a kraut-like flavor and odor but is milder and more tender. It makes a refreshing winter salad. Sauer lettuce is also a good canned product.

The directions for making sauer lettuce are the same as for sauerkraut, but sauer lettuce may also be made using the solid head.

On the Table

Sauerkraut and wieners or sauerkraut and spareribs are well-known favorites. But there are many other ways in which sauerkraut can be used. Sauerkraut cooked with sausage, ham, or roast pork is especially pleasing.

Another combination you will want to try is sauerkraut with cheese and mashed potatoes. This makes a satisfying and low-cost dish that is easily and quickly prepared. Many people cook sauerkraut too much. Simmer only until it is heated through — do not boil.